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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH OFFERS NEW ONE-STOP WEB SITE FOR PANDEMIC FLU INFORMATION

Site Will Contain Information for Businesses, Government, Individuals and More

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Avian Flu? Seasonal Flu? Pandemic? Vaccine? Antiviral? H5N1? Are you confused by these terms you are seeing in the media? Do you want to know how you can protect your family and your community from the threats associated with a worldwide disease outbreak? The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) this week launched a new Web site, www.vdh.virginia.gov/pandemicflu that can help.

This new Web site provides Virginians with a single resource for comprehensive information about Avian Flu and preparing for the possibility of a global outbreak, or pandemic, of the flu. The site combines resources from multiple agencies at the federal and state levels and organizes it for various groups, including businesses, governments, the agricultural community and for individual citizens.

VDH has been leading efforts in the Commonwealth to educate the public about the difference between seasonal flu, Avian Flu and a pandemic, and to provide local governments and decision makers with tools and tips they can use to prepare for the possibility of a pandemic. However, public health officials alone cannot answer all of the questions raised as a pandemic threat looms.

“No one government agency or group can prevent a pandemic or do everything necessary to protect the health of our citizens. Every Virginian needs to know how to prepare their families, friends, coworkers and neighbors for a pandemic” said Lisa Kaplowitz, M.D., M.S.H.A, VDH’s deputy commissioner for emergency preparedness and response. “Our goal in creating this Web site is to provide the most up-to-date and comprehensive information regarding the outbreak of Avian Flu in Europe and Asia, and tips about how we all can prepare for the significant impact a pandemic would have here in Virginia.”

The resource was developed in partnership with the Pandemic Flu Advisory Committee, a group organized by VDH in early 2005 representing government, health care, schools, private industry, law enforcement and emergency response groups. The goal of this group is to provide input to VDH in the development of Virginia’s pandemic flu policy and resources to address the complex and wide-reaching issues that would arise if a pandemic were to develop in Virginia.

“Though there is no pandemic, and Avian Flu has not developed in the United States, it is important for all aspects of society to prepare for the possibility of a pandemic,” Kaplowitz said.

The www.vdh.virginia.gov/pandemicflu site draws information from national response plans and resources available on the federal pandemic flu Web site, www.pandemicflu.gov, and augments these with Virginia-specific information compiled from various state agencies and the Virginia Department of Health. It also gives Virginians the opportunity to submit their own pandemic flu questions.

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